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The utilization of ICT in the teaching and learning of English: ‘Tell Me More’

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Abstract:

In order to maximize the utilization of the computers and courseware in teaching and learning, the perceptions of the users towards the technology should be taken into consideration. This study was designed to investigate students’ and English language lecturers’ perception of a courseware known as ‘TELL ME MORE’ regarding the implementation, as well as, the evaluation as a teaching and learning tool to support the students’ learning of English language. A total of 85 semester one students of a polytechnic in Malaysia responded to a set of questionnaire consisting of 38 items using 1-4 Likert scale instrument. Semi-structured interviews with 4 English language lecturers from the same polytechnic were also conducted. Analysis showed that, students and English language lecturers indicated positive perceptions on the ease of use, usefulness and suitability of the courseware and that the courseware is an effective tool to support language learning.

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Keyword: Educational multimedia courseware, ‘Tell Me More’, ESL lecturers and perceptions.

1. Introduction

Integration of technology into language education has become an everyday occurrence. Educational multimedia courseware as resource materials to enhance the teaching and learning of English language was produced extensively. In catching up with the progress of the technology, the polytechnic involved in this study is also not to be left behind. Therefore, there are two English language laboratories provided in the polytechnic, complete with computers which are installed with courseware named TELL ME MORE. This courseware is used as a learning tool in English language classroom with a hope that it could help in overcoming students’ proficiency problem. It is hoped that by using the courseware, students’ interest in learning the language could be gained and eventually their proficiency could be improved.

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2. The Use of Technology in Language Teaching

In the past, the cost of computers and courseware greatly restricted the use of computers in education. Now, however, regardless of the cost, computers and courseware are becoming important tools for learning in institutions. Indeed, in the polytechnic, considerable pressure is being put on the English language lecturers to make use of the courseware marvels in their lesson as the cost of the courseware is rather expensive. With the use of the courseware in the English language classroom in the polytechnic, and, with the integration of ICT in the teaching of the subject, it is important to ensure that the courseware really supports the students' learning as a learning tool; and whether the use of courseware is benefit for a long term investment for the polytechnic. English language lecturers cannot simply assume that the techniques, approaches and strategies that worked well in the traditional learning environment of the classroom can simply be successfully used in the environment of the ICT.

Students' perceptions were found to influence the success of integration, specifically the amount of technology use, the ways in which the technology was used, and teachers' and students' expectations about learning. Davis et al. (1989; cited in Melor 2007) tested the Technology Acceptance Model and found that people's computer use was predicted by their reasons for use and that perceived usefulness was also strongly linked to this reason. According to Technology Acceptance Model, there is a significant impact on a user's attitude towards using the systems. Melor (2007) used the Technology Acceptance Model by Davis et al. (1989) and conducted a study on 'Malaysian ESL Teachers' Use of ICT in Their Classrooms' found that ESL teachers perceive that ICT enhances the need to know how to integrate it in teaching, helps their students understand English better, facilitates their students' language learning, enables their students to use real or authentic language with people and meets the individual language learning needs of their students. In addition to factors such as computer access, time constraints, individual computer skills and hardware issues (Melor, 2007a), learner socio-cultural backgrounds, previous knowledge and learning experiences also contribute to their perceptions of the learning process (Melor, 2007b). Only through students perceiving learning technologies as part of a learning context which encourages independence in learning and deep learning approaches are enhanced, the desirable learning outcomes would likely take place (Cope & Ward, 2002).

In language teaching, the use of computers has started since thirty years ago. Computer Assisted Language Learning or known as CALL was introduced since 1960s. When integrated appropriately, CALL technologies can support experiential learning and practice in a variety of modes, provide effective feedback to learners, enable pair and group work, promote exploratory and global learning, enhance student achievement, provide access to authentic materials, facilitate greater interaction, individualize instruction, allow independence from a single source of information, and motivate learners (Lee, 2000). A comparative study in Malaysia between CALL and traditional teaching method conducted by Rohaya et al. (cited in Ashinida et al. 2004) shows that CALL helps in improving students' linguistic skills. Adi Afzal et al. (cited in Ashinida et al., 2004) in their study mentioned that CALL is helpful in increasing students' motivation and less time consuming in learning certain concepts.

3. Methodology

This study employed a mix method research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approach through combination of methods which are questionnaire and semi-structured interview in the collection of data. A total of 85 semester one students from a polytechnic in Malaysia had participated in the questionnaires. Apart from that, 4 English language lecturers from the same polytechnic had also involved in a semi-structured interview. In order to investigate the implementation, Davis's (1989) Technology Acceptance Model is used while for the evaluation of the courseware is based on Chapelle's criteria for CALL evaluation (2001).

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Implementation of "TELL ME MORE"

4.1.1 Students' perception on the ease of use of TELL ME MORE courseware in learning English language

Table 1. Distribution, frequency and mean on the students' perception on the ease of use of the courseware in language learning

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree(%)	Strongly Agree (%)
I find TELL ME MORE is easy to use.			20 (23.5)	65 (76.5)
I find TELL ME MORE learning activities are interactive.	1(1.2)	1(1.2)	23(27.1)	69(70.6)
I find TELL ME MORE is an interesting courseware.	2(2.4)	1(1.2)	18(21.2)	64(64.0)
I find TELL ME MORE learning activities are easily understood.	1(1.2)		32(37.6)	52 (61.2)
I find TELL ME MORE learning activities are fun.	1 (1.2)	1(1.2)	36(42.4)	47(55.3)
I find the language used in TELL ME MORE is clear and easy to understand.			28 (32.9)	57(67.1)

N= 85, Item= 6, Alpha=.969

In terms of ease of use of the courseware in learning English language, the findings showed that majority of the students agreed that TELL ME MORE courseware is easy to use probably because the students found the language used in the courseware was clear and easy to understand (Table 1). The findings from the questionnaire is in line with the findings from a study conducted by Mohd Jasmy et al. (2001) where they found that students can comprehend easily and better due to simple, easy and clear presentation of information. Moreover, students would feel more comfortable and open to accept any mistakes or errors throughout the whole learning process, as the learning process is between the students themselves and the computer, therefore, it creates a non-threatening environment where the students lower their affective filter and hopefully more learning takes place (Wan Irham & Shafinah, 2003). Overall, it showed that majority of the students perceived the ease of use of the courseware. This is in line with Davis et al (1989) who refer perceived ease of use to 'the degree to which the prospective user expects the target system to be free of effort'.

The findings from the interview revealed that the English language lecturers agreed that the courseware is easy to use because it is a simple courseware and very user-friendly. Apart from that, one of the lecturer also mentioned that the courseware also come with a manual in which students should be able to refer if they are having difficulties or problems. Furthermore, the students could also refer to their instructor or lecturer.

4.1.2 Students' perception on the usefulness of TELL ME MORE courseware in learning English language

Table 2. Distribution, frequency and mean on the students' perception on the usefulness of the courseware in language learning

Item	Strongly Disagree(%)	Disagree(%)	Agree(%)	Strongly Agree(%)
Using TELL ME MORE would help me to improve my English language proficiency.			20(23.5)	65(76.5)
Using TELL ME MORE is useful for English language learning.	1(1.2)		19(22.4)	65(76.5)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities to improve listening skills.	1(1.2)		19(22.4)	65(76.5)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities to improve speaking skills.	1(1.2)		18(21.2)	66(77.6)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities to improve reading skills.		2(2.4)	28(32.9)	55(64.7)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities to improve writing skills.		1(1.2)	39(45.9)	45(52.9)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities on learning grammar.		1(1.2)	34(40.0)	50(58.8)
TELL ME MORE provides students with useful activities on vocabulary enrichment.			26(30.6)	59(69.4)

N= 85, Item= 8, Alpha=.968

In terms of usefulness of the courseware in learning English language, the results clearly demonstrated that all of the students agreed that TELL ME MORE courseware helps them in improving their English language proficiency and almost all (98.9%) agreed that the courseware is useful for English language learning (Table 2). This was probably because the learning was more towards student-centred. According to Smeets and Mooij (2001; cited in Carmen et al., 2003), a student-centred environment facilitates "active-learning, discovery learning and higher-order thinking" which makes learning more meaningful. That was why in this study, the students found that the courseware has helped them to improve their proficiency. This is supported by Carmen et al. (2003) who say that integrating ICT tools in teaching can lead to increase students' learning competencies and increase opportunities for

communication. Another reason probably because the courseware could support their learning as most of the activities provides explanations and feedback.

Responses from the interview showed that all of the English language lecturers think that the courseware helps their students in improving their proficiency especially in pronunciation and reading.

4.1.3 Students' perception on the suitability of TELL ME MORE courseware in learning English language

Table 3. Distribution, frequency and mean on the students' perception on the suitability of the courseware in language learning

Item	Strongly Disagree (%)	Disagree (%)	Agree (%)	Strongly Agree (%)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning English language.	2(2.4)		25(29.4)	58(68.2)
TELL ME MORE is suitable for my level of proficiency.		1(1.2)	24(28.2)	60(70.6)
TELL ME MORE learning activities are suitable for my course.	7(8.2)	24(28.2)	29(34.1)	25(29.4)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning listening skills.	1(1.2)		20(23.5)	64(75.3)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning speaking skills.	1(1.2)	1(1.2)	17(20.0)	66(77.6)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning reading skills.		1(1.2)	38(44.7)	46(54.1)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning writing skills.		6(7.1)	39(45.8)	40(47.1)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for learning grammar.	1(1.2)	6(7.1)	31(36.5)	47(55.2)
TELL ME MORE is a suitable tool for vocabulary enrichment.		2(2.4)	28(32.9)	55(64.7)
The graphics used are suitable.		1(1.2)	21(24.7)	63(74.1)
The videos used are suitable		2(2.4)	20(23.5)	63(74.1)
The used of the native speaker in the audio are suitable.		4(4.7)	20(23.5)	61(71.8)

N= 85, Item= 12, Alpha=.968

In terms of suitability of the courseware, the findings from the questionnaire given to the students on the suitability of TELL ME MORE courseware showed that the courseware is a suitable tool for learning English language (Table 3). The findings also showed that among all skills, it was found that the learning of grammar using the courseware has the lowest percentage of suitability. This was probably because the students found it difficult to learn grammar without any guidance from their English language lecturers. Reading and writing skills also scored low percentage. This revealed that the courseware is not suitable for the learning of reading and writing.

The findings from the interview showed that two of the English language lecturers agreed that the courseware is a suitable tool for the teaching of English language. Both of them said that listening, speaking and reading are the most suitable skills to be taught using the courseware.

4.2 Evaluation of "TELL ME MORE"

4.2.1 Language learning potential

In terms of language learning potential, results showed that all of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they could remember what they have learnt using TELL ME MORE and almost all of them agreed and strongly agreed that they could understand the explanation in the activities clearly. The results indicated that the students believed that they get enough practice with the listening activities in the courseware. Based on the findings, it could be seen that the students believed that they get enough practice with the listening, speaking and pronunciation as compared to other skills. This was probably because the interactivity of the activities in the courseware. Most of the activities required students to respond with the computers. Thus, all speaking, listening and pronunciation skills are involved. As compared to reading, grammar and vocabulary, there are less interaction happens. That was why the students found that they had less practice for reading, grammar and vocabulary. As for writing, it has the lowest mean score probably because there are not many activities for writing provided in the courseware. The students had an opinion that the courseware is potential for language learning as they did not have problem with the activities provided in the courseware. In fact, they understood the explanation provided in the courseware and that they got enough activities in learning listening skills via the use of the courseware. However, the use of the courseware outside of the classroom was impossible because of license issue. Nevertheless, they agreed that in terms of language learning potential, there were enough exercises provided in the courseware. The findings also complement

the idea of Chapelle (2001) that language learning potential was defined as the degree of opportunity present for beneficial focus on form.

The findings from the interview showed that all four English language lecturers believed that their students are able to use the courseware independently. One of the English language lecturers said, “... *they are able to explore the activities on their own.*” (Cik Suri).

4.2.2 Learner Fit

With regards to the learner fit criterion, the results indicated that all of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the activities in TELL ME MORE are appropriate for their level of proficiency and almost all of the students reported that they are motivated to learn English when they use the courseware. The findings compliment the findings by Adi Afzal et al. (cited in Ashinida et al. 2004) who reported that CALL is helpful in increasing students’ motivation and less time consuming in learning certain concepts. The students in this study were motivated probably due to the fact they were tested based on their level. This is supported by Chapelle (2001) where she defined that learner fit as the amount of opportunity for engagement with language under appropriate conditions given learner characteristics. The findings also revealed that all of the students agreed and strongly agreed that the activities in the courseware are easy and help them to learn English language. It was probably because the students received a comprehensible input based on their level of proficiency.

All lecturers commented that the courseware is at the appropriate level of their students’ proficiency. They also mentioned that there is no problem regarding the level of difficulty because the courseware provides different levels of difficulty for different level of proficiency. One of the English language lecturers responded; “*I think for the beginner students, there shouldn’t be any problem for them in order to answer or to go through the activities. For the intermediate and advance students shouldn’t be any problem because they are stages and various degrees of difficulty. The beginner they can choose the beginner level, the intermediate they can choose the intermediate level and same goes to the advance where they can choose the advance level.*” (Cik Arissa).

4.2.3 Meaning Focus

As for the meaning focus, the results demonstrated that almost all of the students reported that they understand the listening activities provided in TELL ME MORE and that they enjoy the listening practice. All of them indicated that they understand and enjoy the speaking activities provided in the courseware. However, only a low percentage of students reported that they understand the reading activities provided in the courseware. A higher percentage of students (97.6%) stated that they agreed and strongly agreed that they enjoy the reading practice. However, a lower percentage of agreement was indicated for the writing activities even though majority of the students enjoyed the writing practice. Surprisingly, the findings also revealed that all of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they understand the grammar explanation provided in the courseware and 98.8% of them agreed and strongly agreed that they enjoy the grammar practice. All of the students also reported that they understand the vocabulary definitions provided in the courseware. The results also demonstrated that almost all of them agreed and strongly agreed that they enjoy the vocabulary practice. Based on the findings, it could be seen that the students enjoy the activities provided in the courseware especially the listening, speaking and reading activities. The students reported that they enjoy the listening, speaking and reading activities more than they understand the activities. This was probably because the activities for listening, speaking and reading are interesting and interactive that attracts the students’ attention.

According to Cik Arissa, she believed that students are able to remember what they have learnt in the courseware because the activities are fun and suitable for their culture and background knowledge.

4.2.4 Authenticity

For the authenticity criterion, it was found that majority (94.1%) of the students reported that they agreed and strongly agreed that what they have learnt in TELL ME MORE is useful outside of the class and that they also practice what they have learnt outside of the classroom. A large number of the students responded that what they

have learnt in the courseware is practical outside of the classroom and what they have learnt in the courseware is same as what they have experienced outside of the classroom. The findings showed that the courseware provides authentic materials for the students. According to Chapelle et al. (2005), authenticity was defined as the degree of correspondence between the learner activity and the target language activity of interest to the learners outside of class. In this study, authenticity is investigated based on whether the language that the students have learnt in TELL ME MORE is needed outside of the class and whether the language used outside of class is like what being provided in the courseware. Based on the students' responses, it could be seen that the language that they learn in the courseware is what they need outside of the classroom.

Pn. Hana believed that her students might have practiced what they have learnt in the courseware because she could see some improvement in her students. She said, *"I think yes because I can see that most of my students...they have improved especially in speaking skills."* (Pn. Hana). One of the lecturer commented that students do practice what they have learnt especially during their practical classes. Nevertheless, it could be seen that only some students are able to practice what they have learnt and at eventually get the benefits of the learning via the use of the courseware. Another lecturer mentioned that the students would have the opportunity to practice only if they encounter the same situation as what they have learnt in the courseware.

4.2.5 Positive Impact

In terms of positive impact, the results indicated that all of the students indicated that they like to use the courseware. This is evident by the findings which revealed that all of them agreed and strongly agreed with item "I like to use TELL ME MORE ". This was probably because the students had positive effects after the using the courseware. According to Chapelle et al. (2005), positive impact was defined as the positive effects of the CALL activity on those who participate in it. Almost all of the students (97.6%) reported that they like the activities in the courseware and they would like to spend more time using the courseware. Here, students did not only learn the new words and see related pictures on the websites, but also get to listen to the correct pronunciation of the words. This kind of activities promote active learning thus attracted the students' interest.

The interview revealed that the lecturers mentioned that their students like to use the courseware due to different reasons. One of the English language lecturers responded, *"... I think they do because there are many activities or skills involve such as listening, reading, communication and so on; all in one."* (Cik Arissa).

4.2.6 Practicality

As far as the practicality was concerned, the results exhibited that more than half (57.7%) of the students agreed and strongly agreed that they need help to use TELL ME MORE. As for the item the computer direction is concerned, almost all of the students reported that the directions are easy to understand. 81.1% of the students, with most of the students strongly agreed, indicated that the language laboratory is conducive for the learning. The findings also revealed that 91.8% of them agreed and strongly agreed that the computers in the language laboratory are of sufficient quality. 80.0% of the students also reported that it takes a lot of time to operate the computers to start the class. The findings from the questionnaire indicated that the courseware is a practical tool to be used in the learning of English language. The results showed that the students did not have problems in using the courseware. This was because the computer directions are easy to use. Therefore, the students did not need help to use the courseware.

Three of the lecturers believed that the time might be sufficient but due to the reason that there are many activities in the courseware, it is impossible for students to be able to try out all activities. It was found that, even though the students do not necessary to try all, but it will be a waste if they do not. Every topic offers lots of activities and exercises. Each activity or exercises is useful and helpful in the learning of the language. This then led to the problem of time constraint. Cik Arissa mentioned that because of limited time, students can only do a few exercises. She said, *"...they cannot go through all. Maybe they can do a few or parts of the activities."* (Cik Arissa). Pn. Hana shared the same view as Cik Arissa, as she stated, *"It is hard to say...I don't think they have enough time. They need more time to go through with the activities provided."*

5. Conclusion

It has to be made salient that students need to be aware of the ease of use, usefulness and suitability of the TELL ME MORE courseware in helping them learning English language. They should also need to be realised that the courseware is effective as a learning tool as it has all positive criteria which are language learning potential, learner fit, meaning focus, authenticity, positive impacts and practicality. The English language lecturers in the polytechnic should utilize the courseware in their teaching and learning process and encourage their students to use it. English language lecturers should also provide students with guidance in order to ensure that students use the courseware successfully for their language development.

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